

**General Assembly**

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Item 115 (d) of the preliminary list*

**Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and
other elections: election of fifteen members of the
Human Rights Council**

**Letter dated 13 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative
of Maldives to the United Nations addressed to the President of the
General Assembly**

I have the honour to inform you that the Republic of Maldives has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2018-2020 at the elections to be held at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

The candidature of the Maldives to the Human Rights Council is a measure of its long-standing commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law both at home and abroad.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Government of Maldives has the honour to attach herewith a document detailing the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Maldives reaffirming its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and its active participation in the work of the Human Rights Council (see annex).

I should greatly appreciate it if the present letter and its annex would be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 115 (d) of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Ahmed Saeed
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/72/50.



Annex to the letter dated 13 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Maldives to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Human rights commitments and pledges

I. Republic of Maldives

1. The Maldives is a small island developing State that champions multilateralism and upholds international law. Promoting the respect for human rights is a prioritized national interest of the Maldives and a core objective in the country's foreign policy. The Maldives believes that a world where fundamental human rights are protected and guaranteed is good for the Maldives and is essential for human innovation and creativity to thrive.

2. The Maldives has unquestionable faith in the United Nations and, in particular, in the Human Rights Council. The Maldives has served on the Human Rights Council with the firm conviction that the promotion and protection of human rights is not an aspiration but a duty and an obligation. We stood tall by the principles and ideas enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations in our engagement and work at the Council. We had the privilege of giving a voice to the smallest members of the international community. Our experience at the Council has also shown us that international engagement in promoting human rights has a direct and positive relationship with progress in key human rights issues at the national level.

3. It is with that conviction, with that commitment, that the Maldives is presenting its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2018-2020. We believe that small States have a larger role to play in global governance. The Maldives and other small States have been thought leaders and norm entrepreneurs, helping to shape consensus on difficult issues, such as the human rights dimensions of climate change. We will continue to play that role in promoting a culture of respect for human rights everywhere, around the world.

II. Maldives pledges

4. If elected to the Human Rights Council, the Maldives will focus on the following issues:

(a) **Empowerment of women.** The Maldives will advocate for Governments, the United Nations system and civil society organizations to adopt more evidence-based policies that can bring both qualitative and quantitative changes in the empowerment of women. We are uniquely placed in the advocacy of empowering women. We were among the first countries in Asia to grant women the right to vote (Maldivian women gained suffrage in the 1930s) and to achieve gender parity in school enrolment. Significant challenges remain, however, which include, in particular at the national level, and the enduring prevalence of traditional notions and the stereotyping of the role of women in society. These are challenges that the Maldives shares with a number of other States, and solutions can be found in the sharing of experiences and best practices. The Maldives will therefore work with other countries and the United Nations system to forge constructive and mutually beneficial partnerships on wide-ranging issues including domestic violence, harassment, equal pay for equal work and the equal participation of women in politics and the economy.

(b) **Protecting and promoting the right of every child.** The Maldives will advance the promotion and the protection of the rights of the child, a top priority in

every aspect of the work of the United Nations system, and will continue its constructive engagement with other States to achieve that goal. The Maldives has some successes in promoting the rights of the child with the help of some innovative policy instruments. For example, the Maldives has reduced infant mortality rates from 121 in 1977 to just 7 in 2015. The Maldives achieved near universal school enrolment, including gender parity, several years before the country made compulsory primary and secondary enrolment. It also pursues a "no child left behind" policy to ensure free education for every child in the country until 18 years of age. With these successes, the Maldives believes that it can engage with countries where protection of child rights is a serious challenge and work with the United Nations system in shaping policies that can promote the rights and the interests of the child.

(c) **Amplifying youth voices.** The Maldives commits to work towards strengthening existing international mechanisms and exploring new avenues for addressing challenges facing young people, facilitating the creation of policies that empower young people through training, job opportunities and towards greater independence. About two thirds of the Maldives population are young people, and the country has, over the years, employed a number of policy instruments aimed at creating opportunities where the creativities of young people can flourish. Youth-majority populations are now becoming the norm among States Members of the United Nations, and the Maldives recognizes the ever-present need to incorporate young people in global, regional and national governance mechanisms. If a young woman or man is old enough to become a parent, soldier or even a registered voter, their contributions to good and effective governance should be actively sought.

(d) **Advancing the interests of the small island developing States at the Council.** As a small island developing State, the Maldives will advance the interests of the small island developing States at the Council and in the entire United Nations system. Over the years, the Maldives and other small States, and small island developing States in particular, have been playing a valuable role in proposing creative solutions to overcome common challenges. The Maldives will continue playing that role with a renewed commitment and, in particular, by adopting a rights-based approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, equitable global governance can only be realized through the participation of all States and the representation of the full diversity of views that exist across the global community. Development paradigms, economic indicators and social priorities must reflect the views of even the smallest State in recognition of the commitment of the United Nations to ensuring that no one is left behind.

(e) **Fortifying the right to environment and rights impacted by climate change.** The Maldives commits to promoting a human rights-based approach on the issues of climate change and the environment. The Maldives took the initiative at the Council to explore the relationship between the impact of climate change and the full enjoyment of human rights. It will continue to pursue the matter through new partnerships that can help to construct global consensus on the issue.

III. Continuing international commitments and pledges

5. At the international level, the Maldives will continue:

(a) To support and encourage the active engagement of small States in multilateral forums and processes;

(b) To promote the interlinked and cross-cutting nature of human rights and development in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(c) To work towards increasing the human rights engagement capacity and resilience of the least developed countries and small island developing States, so that these countries have the capacity to fulfil their international human rights obligations;

(d) To work with like-minded countries in creating a culture of respect and support for values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the sovereign equality of all States irrespective of size, military prowess or economic might, in particular with regard to emerging democracies.

IV. Promoting human rights in the Maldives

6. The Maldives will continue to emphasize, at the national and international levels, the importance of cultivating the value of respect for human rights to complement formal statutory measures in promoting human rights. In order to do that, the Maldives pledges to continue to forge a strong partnership with members of the Human Rights Council in strengthening the national human rights protection mechanism.

7. At the national level, the Maldives will continue:

(a) To improve the functioning and effectiveness of its independent national institutions;

(b) To promote the space for a responsible and vibrant media and civil society;

(c) To enact enabling legislations for international human rights instruments so that they are observed and integrated into all aspects of the Maldivian society, and to continue to explore the viability of acceding to other international human rights instruments;

(d) To follow up on the recommendations of the universal periodic review and the concluding observations of treaty bodies.